

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## ES.I INTRODUCTION

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the United States (US) Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop and periodically revise or amend its resource management plans (RMPs), which guide management of BLM-administered lands.

The BLM is undertaking a large-scale effort to amend or revise RMPs with associated Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) in response to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) *12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) as Threatened or Endangered* (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). In that 12-Month Finding, the USFWS concluded that Greater Sage-Grouse (also referred to as sage-grouse or GRSG) was “warranted, but precluded” for listing as a threatened or endangered species. The USFWS reviewed the status of, and threats to, the GRSG in relation to the five Listing Factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Of the five Listing Factors reviewed, the USFWS determined that Factor A, “the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the Greater Sage-Grouse,” and Factor D, “the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms,” posed “a significant threat to the Greater Sage-Grouse now and in the foreseeable future” (USFWS 2010). The USFWS identified conservation measures in RMPs as the BLM’s principal regulatory mechanisms.

Consistent with the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy, the BLM is preparing several environmental impact statements (EISs) as part of land use plan (LUP) revisions or amendments. These documents will address a range of alternatives focused on specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG. The amendments will be coordinated under two administrative planning regions across the entire range of the GRSG. The Great Basin Region and the Rocky Mountain Region boundaries are drawn roughly to correspond with the threats identified by the USFWS in the 2010 listing decision, along with the

Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) management zones framework (Stiver et al. 2006). The management zones reflect ecological and biological issues and similarities. In addition, management challenges within management zones are similar, and GRSG and their habitats are likely responding similarly to environmental factors and management actions. The Great Basin Region consists of land use plans in California, Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho and in portions of Utah and Montana. The Rocky Mountain Region consists of land use plans in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado and in portions of Montana and Utah.

The Rocky Mountain and Great Basin regions are further divided into sub-regions, which generally correspond with the WAFWA Management Zones and threats to GRSG. Each of the 15 sub-regions is undertaking an effort, including developing an EIS, to incorporate GRSG conservation measures into RMPs that address GRSG habitat. A goal of all such RMPAs is to ensure management consistency across the sub-region, as well as across the range of the GRSG by establishing GRSG conservation measures.

The BLM Oregon/Washington State Office is undertaking this Oregon Sub-Region EIS, which analyzes the effects of amending up to eight RMPs in order to provide consistent management of all GRSG habitat on BLM-administered lands in Oregon. While the Forest Service is a cooperating agency at the national level of GRSG planning, the Forest Service is conducting a separate concurrent planning effort in Oregon, incorporating GRSG management guidelines from the NTT report as appropriate.

The proposed RMPAs will identify and incorporate appropriate regulatory mechanisms to conserve, enhance, and restore GRSG habitat and to eliminate, reduce, or minimize threats to this habitat on BLM-administered lands in Oregon. The proposed RMPAs address both Listing Factors A and D (described above) and are intended to provide consistency in the management of GRSG habitats across Oregon BLM districts. The BLM intends to issue one Record of Decision (ROD) for the Oregon Sub-region by September 30, 2014. The following RMPs are proposed to be amended through this effort to incorporate appropriate conservation measures:

- Andrews RMP (BLM 2005a)
- Baker RMP (BLM 1989a)
- Brothers LaPine RMP (BLM 1989b)
- Lakeview RMP (BLM 2003a)
- Southeastern Oregon RMP (BLM 2002)
- Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area RMP (BLM 2005b)
- Three Rivers RMP (BLM 1992a)

- Upper Deschutes RMP (BLM 2005c)

## ES.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE GREATER SAGE-GROUSE PLANNING AREA

The planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM would make decisions during this planning effort. The planning area boundary includes all lands regardless of jurisdiction. For this RMPA/EIS, the planning area is the entire Oregon Sub-region. The entire planning area is east of the Cascade Mountains; contains private, federal, and state lands; and totals 31,756,507 acres (see **Table ES-1**, Surface Land Management of PPH and PGH in the Planning Area).

**Table ES-1**  
**Surface Land Management of PPH and PGH in the Planning Area**

Surface Land Management	PPH (acres)	PGH (acres)	Total (acres)
BLM	4,546,897	5,662,631	10,209,528
Forest Service	63,824	117,403	181,227
Department of Defense	0	0	0
Department of Energy	8,752	16,382	25,133
National Park Service	0	0	0
USFWS	247,428	51,077	298,506
Bureau of Indian Affairs	18,177	313	18,490
Bureau of Reclamation	23	17,084	17,107
Federal Aviation Administration	0	120	120
General Services Administration	0	455	455
USDA (non-Forest Service)	0	14,064	14,064
Private	1,514,113	1,955,574	3,469,687
State Trust Lands	0	0	0
State, County, and City Lands	156,234	383,434	539,667
Acreage of Water	578	1,318	1,897
Undetermined	0	3,279	3,279
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,556,025</b>	<b>8,223,134</b>	<b>14,779,159</b>

Source: Oregon/Washington BLM 2013

The Burns, Lakeview, Prineville, and Vale Districts administer the eight RMPs being amended by this RMPA/EIS (**Table ES-2**, BLM RMPs in the Planning Area). The acres of PPH and PGH occurring on BLM-administered lands and non-BLM-administered lands in the planning area are in **Table ES-3**, Surface Management of PPH and PGH by RMP in the Planning Area (see also **Figure ES-1**, Oregon Sub-Region Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Area).

**Table ES-2**  
**BLM RMPs in the Planning Area**

BLM RMP	Total Surface Area (acres)	BLM-Administered Surface Lands (acres)
Andrews	1,682,151	1,217,231
Steens	496,301	428,634

**Table ES-2**  
**BLM RMPs in the Planning Area**

<b>BLM RMP</b>	<b>Total Surface Area (acres)</b>	<b>BLM-Administered Surface Lands (acres)</b>
Three Rivers	3,592,993	1,618,569
Lakeview	5,996,474	3,204,121
Brothers LaPine	1,937,377	710,039
Upper Deschutes	2,828,165	403,589
Baker	8,761,664	419,671
Southeastern Oregon	6,461,382	4,616,172
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,756,507</b>	<b>12,618,026</b>

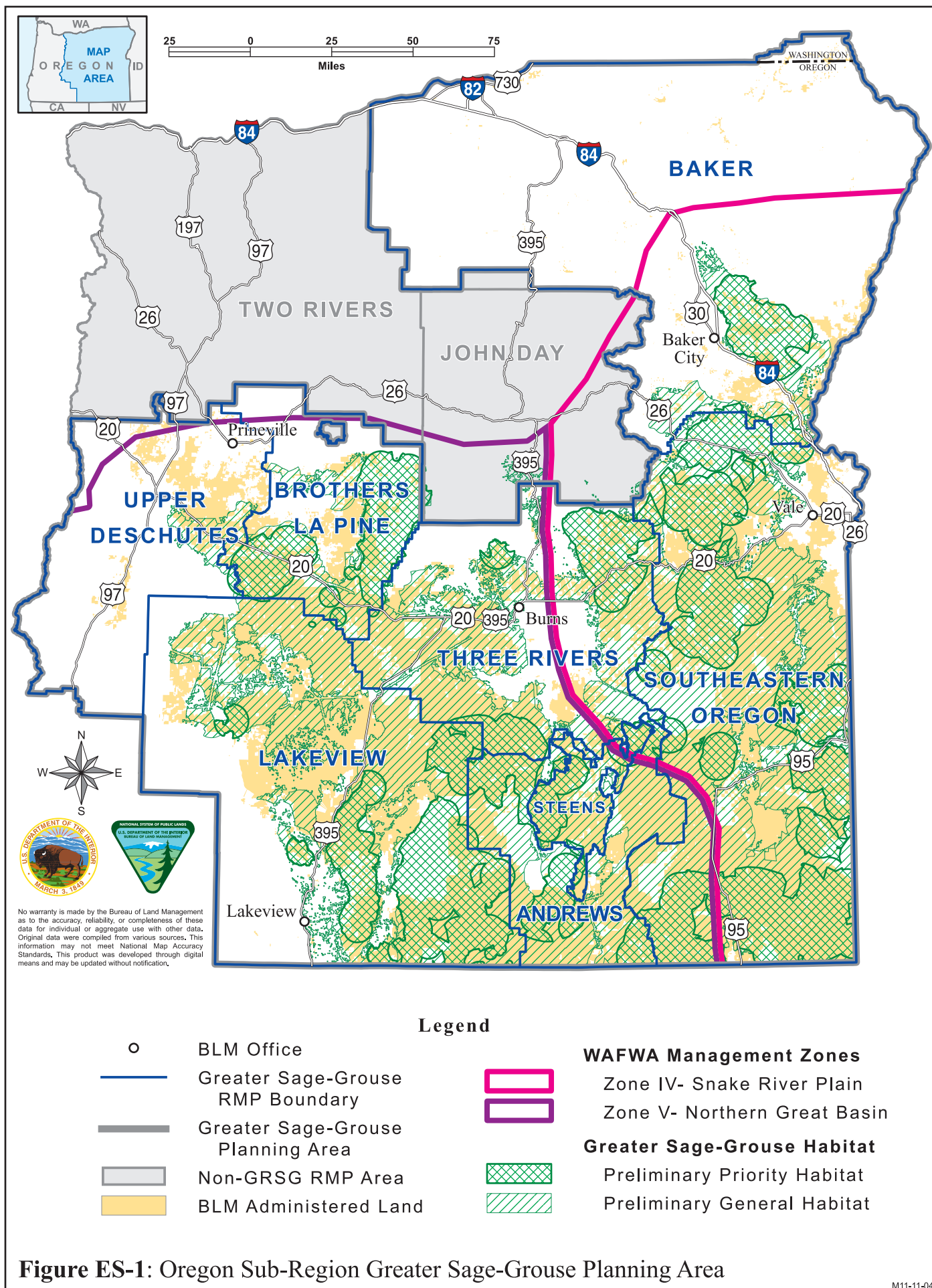
Source: Oregon/Washington BLM 2013

**Table ES-3**  
**Surface Land Management of PPH and PGH by RMP in the Planning Area**

<b>RMP</b>	<b>PPH (acres)</b>		<b>PGH (acres)</b>		<b>PPH and PGH (acres)</b>		<b>Total Habitat (acres)</b>
	<b>BLM</b>	<b>Non-BLM</b>	<b>BLM</b>	<b>Non-BLM</b>	<b>BLM</b>	<b>Non-BLM</b>	
Andrews	398,421	126,195	745,746	254,843	1,144,167	381,038	1,525,204
Steens	208,064	18,884	198,560	45,404	406,625	64,287	470,912
Three Rivers	369,613	188,112	1,047,807	656,928	1,417,420	845,040	2,262,460
Lakeview	975,181	408,758	1,359,553	401,739	2,334,734	810,498	3,145,232
Brothers LaPine	329,424	367,857	210,632	170,394	540,056	538,251	1,078,307
Upper Deschutes	205	13,085	89,660	71,446	89,865	84,531	174,396
Baker	139,234	265,570	66,281	239,346	205,516	504,916	710,432
Southeastern Oregon	2,126,899	620,522	1,944,393	721,151	4,071,292	1,341,673	5,412,965
<b>All RMPs</b>	<b>4,547,043</b>	<b>2,008,984</b>	<b>5,662,631</b>	<b>2,561,250</b>	<b>10,209,674</b>	<b>4,570,234</b>	<b>14,779,908</b>

Source: Oregon/Washington BLM 2013

Although the entire planning area includes various land management entities, the management directions and actions outlined in this RMPA/EIS will apply only to BLM-administered surface lands in the planning area (Table ES-2) and BLM-administered federal mineral estate that may lie beneath other surface ownership, often referred to as split-estate lands. These two areas are collectively referred to as the decision area. There are 12,618,026 acres of BLM-administered surface lands in the planning area. There are 2,639,000 acres of BLM-administered mineral split-estate beneath private surface lands that are also in the planning area. When combined together, these two areas total 15,257,026 acres (the decision area). The decisions analyzed in the RMPAs are limited to making land use planning decisions specific to the conservation of GRS and their habitat.



**Figure ES-1: Oregon Sub-Region Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Area**

The planning area is covered by two larger WAFWA GRSG Management Zones: Snake River Plain (Management Zone IV) and Northern Great Basin (Management Zone V; Figure 1-2; Stiver et al. 2006). There are approximately 13.7 and 5.1 million acres of PPH in MZ IV and V, and 4.9 and 4.2 million acres of PGH in MZ IV and V, respectively.

### **ES.2.1 Land Uses**

Land uses occurring within GRSG habitat include energy and mineral development; recreation; livestock grazing; and rights-of-way (including, but not limited to, roads, pipelines, power lines, and communication sites). BLM-administered lands within the habitat are generally open to mineral uses including leasable, locatable, and mineral material with a few exceptions, but not all available lands are currently under a lease.

## **ES.3 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The BLM is preparing RMP amendments with associated EISs for RMPs containing GRSG habitat. This effort is needed to respond to the USFWS's March 2010 "warranted, but precluded" ESA listing petition decision. Inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms was identified as a significant threat to GRSG in the USFWS finding on the petition to list the GRSG. RMP conservation measures were identified as the BLM's principal regulatory mechanism. Changes in management of GRSG habitats are necessary to avoid the anticipated continued decline of populations across the species' range. These RMPAs will focus on areas affected by threats to GRSG habitat identified by the USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision. Additionally the plan amendments will consider information from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) revised and updated *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon: A Plan to Maintain and Enhance Populations and Habitat* (hereafter "The State Plan"), which provides guidance to public land management agencies and land managers for GRSG conservation (Hagen 2011). The state has responsibility and authority to manage wildlife.

The purpose for the RMPA is to identify and incorporate appropriate conservation measures in RMPs to conserve, enhance and/or restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to that habitat. The BLM will consider such measures in the context of its multiple-use sustained yield mandate under the FLPMA and incorporate measures that will help conserve, enhance and/or restore GRSG habitat by reducing, eliminating, or minimizing threats to that habitat.

Because the BLM administers a large portion of GRSG habitat within the affected states, incorporating additional conservation measures into relevant BLM RMPs is anticipated to have a considerable beneficial impact on present and future GRSG populations and could reduce the need to list the species under the ESA.

## **ES.4 PROPOSED ACTION**

This draft Oregon Greater Sage-Grouse RMPA/EIS provides future management direction to maintain or increase GRSG abundance and distribution by conserving, enhancing, or restoring the sagebrush ecosystem on which populations depend throughout WAFWA Management Zones IV and V in the planning area (Stiver et al. 2006). Proposed amendments to the BLM LUPs would include allowable uses and management actions for select resources and resource uses. Allowable uses are those that are allowed, restricted, or prohibited and may include stipulations. The alternatives identify the range of management actions, restrictions, and constraints that would be placed on allowable uses on BLM-administered lands to conserve, restore, and enhance GRSG habitat.

## **ES.5 SCOPING**

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope, or range, of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues to consider in the planning process. Scoping identifies the affected public and agency concerns, defines the relevant issues and alternatives that would be examined in detail in the EIS, and eliminates those that are not relevant. A planning issue is defined as a major controversy or dispute regarding management or uses on BLM-administered lands that can be addressed through a range of alternatives. The environmental impacts of these alternative management scenarios are analyzed and addressed in this EIS.

The scoping period for the Oregon Sub-region GRSG RMPAs, along with the other sub-regional efforts, began on December 9, 2011. It was extended through a Notice of Correction published February 10, 2012, and ended on March 23, 2012. Scoping in January 2012 included open-house meetings in Baker City, Burns, Lakeview, Ontario, and Prineville. News releases were used to notify the public regarding the scoping period and the planning process and to invite the public to provide written comments from many sources including via email, fax, and regular mail. Comments obtained from the public during the scoping period were used to define the relevant issues to be addressed by a reasonable range of alternatives.

For the Oregon Sub-region planning process, scoping comments received from the public were placed in one of three categories:

1. Issues identified for consideration in the Oregon Greater Sage-Grouse RMPA/EIS
2. Issues to be addressed through policy or administrative action (and therefore not addressed in the RMPA/EIS)
3. Issues eliminated from detailed analysis because they are beyond the scope of the RMPA/EIS (and therefore not addressed in the RMPA/EIS)

## ES.6 ISSUES

During the range-wide public scoping process and during the statewide planning effort, the BLM identified issues for consideration in the Oregon Sub-region RMPA/EIS. The final Scoping Summary Report, prepared in conjunction with these RMPA/EISs, summarizes the scoping and issue-identification process. The issues identified in the Scoping Report fall into 1 of 13 broad categories. Other resource and use issues are identified in the BLM Planning Handbook (H-1610-1). All of the following issues were considered in developing the alternatives brought forward for analysis:

**Table ES-4**  
**Range-Wide Planning Issue Categories and Statements**

<b>Planning Issue Category</b>	<b>Planning Issue Statement</b>
Greater Sage-Grouse and Sage-Grouse habitat	How would the BLM use the best available science to designate PPH, PGH, and non-habitat categories and accurately monitor the impact of land uses on GRSB?
Energy and mineral development	How would energy and mineral development, including renewable energy development, be managed within GRSB habitat while recognizing valid existing rights?
Livestock grazing	What measures would the BLM put in place to protect and improve GRSB habitat while maintaining grazing privileges?
Vegetation management	How would the BLM conserve, enhance, or restore GRSB habitat such as sagebrush communities and minimize or prevent the introduction or spread of noxious weeds and invasive species?
Fish and wildlife	What measures would be put in place to manage habitat for other wildlife species and reduce conflicts with GRSB?
Lands and realty	What opportunities exist to adjust public land ownership that would increase management efficiency for GRSB and GRSB habitat?
Social, economic, and environmental justice	How could the BLM promote or maintain activities that provide social and economic benefit to local communities while providing protection for GRSB habitat?
Recreation and travel management	How would motorized, non-motorized, and mechanized travel be managed to provide access to federal lands and a variety of recreation opportunities, while protecting GRSB and GRSB habitat?
Fire	What measures should be undertaken to manage fuels and wildland fires, while protecting GRSB habitat?
Special management areas	What special management areas would be designated by the BLM to benefit the conservation, enhancement, and restoration of GRSB and GRSB habitat?
Water and Soil	How would the BLM protect water and soil resources in order to benefit GRSB habitat?
Drought/climate change	How would the BLM incorporate the impacts of a changing climate on GRSB habitat?
Wild horse and burro	What measures would the BLM put in place to reduce the impacts of wild horses and burros on GRSB habitat?



Key issues specifically discussed in the Oregon Sub-region comments included energy and mineral development, social issues, economic issues, fire management, livestock grazing, vegetation management, special management areas, wildlife, and recreation. General planning issue statements stated above in **Table ES-4** are also applicable for the Oregon Sub-region. In addition, the following issues were identified:

- **Energy and Mineral Development:** How will current and potential mineral extraction in the planning area be managed to minimize economic impacts and allow for GRSG conservation?

Finally, some issues were eliminated from detailed analysis because they are beyond the scope of the RMPAs. The following issues were determined to be outside the scope of the range-wide planning effort:

- **Hunting Greater Sage-Grouse**—Commenters questioned why GRSG hunting is allowed if the bird is in need of protection. Hunting is an allowed use on BLM-administered lands and is regulated by state wildlife agencies. Comments regarding hunting relate to state-regulated actions and are outside the scope of the plan amendment.
- **Predator control**—Commenters stated that control was needed to protect GRSG from predation. The ODFW possesses primary authority and responsibility for managing the wildlife within the state, while the BLM is responsible for managing habitat/ Predator control is allowed on BLM-administered lands and is regulated by the ODFW; these comments therefore relate to state-regulated actions and are outside the scope of the plan amendment.
- **Warranted but precluded decision and management under ESA listing**—Commenters questioned population levels and the need to incorporate range-wide conservation measures. Others questioned the effectiveness of ESA listing as a method of species conservation. These comments relate to decisions under the purview of the USFWS and are not addressed in this plan amendment.
- **Elimination of livestock grazing on all BLM-administered lands**—Commenters asked that grazing be limited or completely stopped on all BLM-administered lands due to detrimental ecosystem effects. Others stated that national grazing policies should be reformed as the requirements are too limiting and impact ranchers' livelihoods. In addition, some commenters state that grazing provides habitat enhancements for certain sensitive species. Decisions about livestock grazing national policies are outside the scope of this amendment and are not made in this planning effort.

However, this document is specific to PPH and PGH, and not all BLM-administered lands. The elimination of livestock (i.e., permitted

grazing use) in GRSG habitat within the decision area is considered in Alternative C as well as the reduction of grazing in Alternatives D and F.

- **Renewable energy policies**—Commenters stated concerns about renewable energy development, including economic instability due to government subsidies and risk of wildlife deaths, specifically bats and birds. General policy decisions about renewable energy management on BLM-administered lands will be determined by national policy and are not addressed in this plan amendment.

## ES.7 DEVELOPMENT OF PLANNING CRITERIA

Planning criteria are based on appropriate laws, regulations, BLM Manual and Handbook sections, and policy directives as well as on public participation and coordination with cooperating agencies; other federal agencies, state, and local governments; and Native American tribes. Planning criteria are the standards, rules, and factors used as a framework to resolve issues and develop alternatives. Planning criteria are prepared to ensure decision making is tailored to the issues and to ensure that the BLM avoid unnecessary data collection and analysis.

Preliminary Planning Criteria:

- The BLM will utilize the WAFWA Conservation Assessment of GRSG and Sagebrush Habitats (Connelly et al. 2004; Coates and D. J. Delehanty 2004, 2008, 2010) and any other appropriate resources, to identify GRSG habitat requirements and required design features.
- The approved RMPA will be consistent with the BLM's National GRSG Conservation Strategy.
- The approved RMPA will comply with FLPMA, NEPA, and CEQ regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500 -1508; DOI regulations at 43 CFR § 46 and 43 CFR Part 1600; the BLM H-1601-I Land Use Planning Handbook, "Appendix C: Program-Specific and Resource-Specific Decision Guidance Requirements" for affected resource programs (BLM 2005a); the 2008 BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-I; BLM 2008e); and all other BLM policies and guidance.
- The approved RMPA will comply with NFMA, NEPA, CEQ regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500 – 1508, Regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture at 36 CFR § 219.
- The RMPA will be limited to making land use planning decisions specific to the conservation of GRSG species and habitats.
- The BLM will consider allocative and prescriptive standards to conserve GRSG and its habitat as well as objectives and

management actions to restore, enhance, and improve GRSG habitat.

- The RMPA will recognize valid existing rights.
- Lands addressed in the RMPA will be BLM-administered land in GRSG habitats, including surface and split-estate lands with BLM subsurface mineral rights. Any decisions in the RMPA will apply only to BLM-administered lands.
- The BLM will use a collaborative and multi-jurisdictional approach, where appropriate, to determine the desired future condition of BLM-administered lands for the conservation of GRSG and their habitats.
- As described by law and policy, the BLM will strive to ensure that conservation measures are as consistent as possible with other planning jurisdictions within the planning area boundaries.
- The BLM will consider a range of reasonable alternatives, including appropriate management prescriptions that focus on the relative values of resources while contributing to the conservation of the GRSG and GRSG habitat.
- The BLM will address socioeconomic impacts of the alternatives. Socio-economic analysis will use the input-output quantitative models IMPLAN and JEDI (for renewable energy analysis) where quantitative data is available.
- The BLM will endeavor to use current scientific information, research, technologies, and results of inventory, monitoring, and coordination to determine appropriate local and regional management strategies that will enhance or restore GRSG habitats.
- Management of GRSG habitat that intersects with WSAs on BLM-administered lands will be guided by BLM Manual 6330, Management of Wilderness Study Areas. Land use allocations made for WSAs must be consistent with BLM Manual 6330 and with other laws, regulations, and policies related to WSA management. Management of GRSG habitat will also be guided by BLM manuals on Wilderness (Manual Section 6340); Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area (National Monument/National Conservation Area Manual Section 6220); Wild and Scenic River (Manual Section 6400); and National Historic Trails (Manual Section 6280).
- For BLM-administered lands, all activities and uses within GRSG habitats will follow existing land health standards. Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington (BLM 1997) and other

programs that have developed standards and guidelines will be applicable to all alternatives for BLM-administered lands.

- The BLM will consult with Native American tribes to identify sites, areas, and objects important to their cultural and religious heritage within GRSG habitats.
- The BLM will coordinate and communicate with state, local, and tribal governments to ensure that the BLM consider provisions of pertinent plans, seek to resolve inconsistencies between state, local, and tribal plans, and provide ample opportunities for state, local, and tribal governments to comment on the development of amendments.
- The BLM will develop vegetation management objectives, including objectives for managing noxious weeds and invasive species (including identification of desired future condition for specific areas), within GRSG habitat.
- The RMPA will be based on the principles of adaptive management.
- Reasonable Foreseeable Development Scenarios and planning for fluid minerals will follow the BLM Handbook H-1624-I and current fluid minerals manual guidance for fluid mineral (oil and gas, coal-bed methane, oil shale) and geothermal resources (BLM 1990a). Reasonably foreseeable development scenarios were not completed for mineral potentials and developments in Oregon.
- The RMPA will be developed using an interdisciplinary approach to prepare reasonable foreseeable development scenarios, ensure cooperating agency review of the proposed alternatives, and analyze resource impacts, including cumulative impacts on natural and cultural resources and the socio-economic environment.
- The most current approved BLM corporate spatial data will be supported by current metadata and will be used to ascertain GRSG habitat extent and quality. Data will be consistent with the principles of the Information Quality Act of 2000.
- ODFW's GRSG data and expertise will be utilized to the fullest extent practicable in making management determinations on BLM-administered lands.
- The BLM will consider a range of reasonable alternatives that are consistent with the conservation objectives and measures included in the Greater-Sage Grouse Conservation Objectives Final Report (COT Report) (USFWS 2013).

## **ES.8 MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES**

The Oregon BLM planning team employed the BLM planning process outlined in Chapter I to develop a reasonable range of alternatives for the RMPA/EIS. The

BLM complied with NEPA and the CEQ implementing regulations at 40 CFR 1500 in the development of alternatives for this draft RMPA/EIS, including seeking public input and analyzing reasonable alternatives.

Issue identification and current management assessment processes began in 2011 with an extensive review by the BLM's interdisciplinary team of current land management decisions and direction from RMPs being amended by this RMPA/EIS. From this, the BLM identified preliminary planning issues that could be addressed in an RMPA.

Between February 2012 and March 2013, the planning team met to develop management goals and to identify objectives and actions to address the goals. Through this process, the planning team developed one No Action Alternative and five action alternatives.

Each alternative contains a discrete set of objectives and management actions and constitutes a separate RMPA with the potential for different long-range outcomes and conditions. The goal is met in varying degrees, with the potential for different long-range outcomes and conditions. Depending on the alternative's objective, conservation measures focus on preliminary priority management areas (PPMAs) for Alternatives B, C, D, and F and on Core area habitat for Alternative E. They also focus on preliminary general management areas (PGMAs) for Alternatives B, C, D, and F and on Low density habitat for Alternative E. PPMAs, PPH, and Core area habitat cover the same areas. PGMAs and PGH cover the same areas and are made up of both Low density habitat and occupied habitat (**Figure 2-2**, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat in Planning Area).

Each of the preliminary action alternatives was designed to:

- Address the planning issues (identified in **Section ES.6**, Issues)
- Fulfill the purpose and need for the RMPA (outlined in **Section ES.3**, Purpose and Need)
- Meet the multiple use mandates of the FLPMA (43 CFR 1716)

The five resulting action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, D, E, and F) offer a range of possible management approaches for responding to planning issues and concerns identified through public scoping, and to maintain or increase GRSG abundance and distribution in the planning area. While the goal is the same across alternatives, each alternative contains a discrete set of objectives and management actions constituting a separate RMPA. The goal is met in varying degrees, with the potential for different long-range outcomes and conditions.

The relative emphasis given to particular resources and resource uses differs as well, including allowable uses, restoration measures, and specific direction pertaining to individual resource programs. When resources or resource uses

are mandated by law or are not tied to planning issues, there are typically few or no distinctions between alternatives.

The action alternatives are directed towards responding to USFWS-identified issues and threats to GRSG and their habitat.

#### **ES.8.1 Alternative A: No Action**

Alternative A meets the CEQ requirement that a No Action Alternative be considered. This alternative continues current management direction and prevailing conditions derived from the existing RMP. Goals and objectives for resources and resource uses are based on the most recent RMP decisions, along with associated amendments, activity and implementation level plans, and other management decision documents. Laws, regulations, and BLM policies that supersede RMP decisions would apply.

Goals and objectives for BLM-administered lands and mineral estate would not change. Appropriate and allowable uses and restrictions pertaining to such activities as utility corridor construction, livestock grazing, mineral leasing and development, and recreation would also remain the same. The BLM would not modify existing or establish additional criteria to identify site-specific use levels for implementation.

Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, is composed of decisions established in the current RODs for the following RMPs: Andrews, Brothers LaPine, Baker, Lakeview, Southeastern Oregon, the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, Three Rivers, and Upper Deschutes. Alternative A also is composed of associated amendments, activity and implementation level plans, and other management decision documents, as well as laws, regulations, and BLM policies that supersede RMP decisions.

Appendix B, Greater Sage-Grouse Management in Oregon Sub-Region Resource Management Plans, lists management actions in the current RMPs that are specific to GRSG and their habitat. These actions are from the RMPs being amended by this RMPA/EIS.

#### **ES.8.2 Alternative B**

The BLM used GRSG conservation measures in the NTT report (Sage-Grouse National Technical Team 2011) to form management direction under Alternative B. BLM management actions, in concert with other state and federal agencies and private landowners, play a critical role in the future trends of GRSG populations. To ensure BLM management actions are effective and based on the best available science, the National Policy Team created the NTT in August 2011. The BLM's objective for chartering this planning strategy was to develop new or revised regulatory mechanisms, through RMPs, to conserve and restore the Greater Sage-Grouse and its habitat on BLM-administered lands range-wide and over the long term. The key distinction about Alternative B is that conservation measures under Alternative B are focused on PPMA (areas

that have the highest conservation value to maintain or increase Sage-Grouse populations). They are also focused on Great Basin-wide concerns for GRSG.

### **ES.8.3 Alternative C**

During scoping individuals and conservation groups submitted management direction recommendations for protection and conservation of GRSG and its habitat. The recommendations, in conjunction with resource allocation opportunities and internal sub-regional BLM input, were reviewed to develop BLM management direction for GRSG under Alternative C. These alternatives contain a mixture of conservation measures from the NTT report and public input.

Conservation measures in Alternative C are focused on a passive restoration approach to PPMA and PGMA. PGMA is occupied (seasonal or year-round) habitat outside of PPMA. These areas have been identified by state fish and wildlife agencies in coordination with respective BLM offices. A noteworthy difference between Alternatives C and F is that Alternative C provides minimal guidance for resources, other than livestock grazing, and that most of the management allocations apply to both PPMA and PGMA.

### **ES.8.4 Alternative D**

Alternative D is the Oregon BLM Alternative and incorporates input from ODFW and the USFWS. It emphasizes balancing resources and resource use among competing human interests and land uses and conserving natural and cultural resource values; at the same time it sustains and enhances ecological integrity across the landscape, including plant, wildlife, and fish habitat. Alternative D incorporates local adjustments to the NTT report and habitat boundaries. This is to provide a balanced level of protection, restoration, enhancement, and use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses. Conservation measures under Alternative D are focused on both PPMA and PGMA.

Alternative D's primary objective is to maintain or enhance GRSG habitat to establish a mix of sagebrush classes so as to provide a sustainable habitat for the GRSG. This objective allows for human-caused disturbance (including current on-the-ground disturbance) to cover less than three percent of PPMA, regardless of ownership; it requires appropriate mitigation for habitat disturbance within PPMA and PGMA. It prioritizes enhancement and restoration of GRSG habitat in order to maintain and or increase GRSG abundance and distribution. It also includes management actions, requirements, and stipulations to meet those objectives that are targeted to the resource issues and challenges specific to eastern Oregon GRSG. Actions described in this and all alternatives are subject to valid existing rights.

#### **Focal Areas**

Alternative D establishes management actions across GRSG habitat in eastern Oregon. It also recognizes that not all GRSG habitat is of equal importance;

thus, in order to focus the BLM's management attention and resources, this alternative identifies a network of GRSG focal areas within eastern Oregon. The focal areas cover a total of 5,169,871 acres, with 3,778,694 acres in PPMA and 1,391,178 acres in PGMA. This network of focal areas is composed of three types of focal areas: climate change consideration areas, high density breeding areas, and restoration opportunity areas.

Unlike land allocations, the focal areas include private lands. These are identified in order to provide private landowners who might be interested in partnering with the BLM to conserve quality GRSG habitat. As always, the BLM's decisions are limited to the public lands it administers. In a number of instances the GRSG focal areas overlap existing land allocations. These are congressionally designated Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, administratively designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and Research Natural Areas. In all cases, BLM management will remain consistent with the underlying congressional or administrative designation. Focal areas are not land allocations. Management to conserve GRSG will not impair the values for which these areas were designated.

#### ***Habitat Mitigation***

In priority and general management areas (PPMA and PGMA), the applicable BLM District Office would analyze specific off-site mitigation measures to compensate for adverse environmental impacts in project-level NEPA analysis. This would be in areas where adverse environmental impacts could not be avoided, minimized, rectified, or reduced to acceptable levels through on-site mitigation. Those unavoidable adverse impacts would be mitigated for. In PPMA, it is the BLM's intention that adverse environmental impacts would be a rare occurrence. In PGMA, it is the BLM's intention that efforts to avoid adverse environmental impacts would be taken before determining that adverse environmental impacts were unavoidable.

The BLM will identify mitigation ratios through the NEPA process (IM No. 2013-142). Off-site mitigation activities would be directed to GRSG focal areas, principally to focal areas identified as restoration opportunity areas. This would allow an overall increase in PPMA acres over time and adjust for the long period of time (years to decades) required to restore sagebrush habitat and the uncertainty involved in the successful outcome of sagebrush habitat restoration. The BLM would identify potential mitigation sites, looking first to nearby focal areas. Mitigation sites would be selected based on the potential success of habitat enhancement or restoration to bring the area to the same quality or better as the habitat impacted. Priority would be given to mitigation sites near the impacted area, and mitigation would be implemented consistent with the principles and standards in the Draft BLM Manual MS-1794 (Offsite Mitigation).



Off-site mitigation for PGMA habitat would be implemented with a mitigation goal of “no net loss” of GRSG habitat. Mitigation ratios may be increased based on the quality of the mitigation site to account for increased risk associated with restoration of lower quality habitats. Off-site mitigation for PPMA habitat would have a goal of “no net loss” with a net gain. This would allow an overall increase in PPMA acres over time. Mitigation ratios would be identified at the project level based on the “no net loss” standard for PGMA and “no net loss, net benefit” standard for PPMA. This, also, may allow an increase in priority habitat acres over time. Mitigation would be implemented consistent with BLM Draft Manual MS-1794.

The BLM would collaborate with the ODFW and USFWS in selecting off-site compensatory mitigation measures.

#### **ES.8.5 Alternative E**

Alternative E is based on the plan laid out in *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon: A Plan to Maintain and Enhance Populations and Habitat* (State Plan), which is intended to promote effective management of GRSG and intact functioning sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) communities in Oregon (Hagen 2011). The State Plan describes the ODFW’s proposed management of GRSG and provides guidance to public land management agencies and land managers for GRSG conservation. GRSG conservation guidelines in the State Plan are designed to maintain (at a minimum) or enhance the quality (the optimum) of current habitats. They will also assist resource managers in achieving the population and habitat objectives of the State Plan.

Alternative E contains GRSG conservation guidelines from the State Plan. Because not all issues identified in the guidelines (e.g., juniper encroachment) are relevant to all regions of the state, only GRSG conservation guidelines from the State Plan that are applicable to the areas covered by the RMPs being amended by this RMPA/EIS are incorporated where appropriate into Alternative E.

##### ***Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy for Oregon***

Goals, policies, and objectives for GRSG population management and habitat management have been adopted into Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR), Chapter 635, Division 140. The administrative rules establish the state policy for the protection and enhancement of GRSG in Oregon. These policies will be implemented by ODFW staff as described in the State Plan.

According to OAR 635-140-0000, in accordance with the Wildlife Policy (Oregon Revised Statutes 496.012), the primary goal is to restore, maintain and enhance populations of Greater Sage-Grouse such that multiple uses of populations and their habitats can continue. Regional and state population objectives shall be identified based on the best information available.

The following population management is found in OAR 635-140-0005:

- Policy: Manage greater sage-grouse statewide to maintain or enhance their abundance and distribution at the 2003 spring breeding population level, approximately 30,000 birds over the next 50 years.
- Objectives: Consistent with the population management policy, achieve the following regional population objectives:
  - (a) Baker Resource Area BLM: maintain or enhance greater sage-grouse abundance and distribution at the 2003 spring breeding population level, approximately 2,000 birds.
  - (b) Vale District BLM excluding Baker Resource Area BLM): maintain or enhance greater sage-grouse abundance and distribution at the 2003 spring breeding population level, approximately 11,000 birds.
  - (c) Burns District BLM: maintain or enhance greater sage-grouse abundance and distribution at the 2003 spring breeding population level, approximately 4,300 birds.
  - (d) Lakeview District BLM: maintain or enhance greater sage-grouse abundance and distribution at the 2003 spring breeding population level, approximately 9,400 birds.
  - (e) Prineville District BLM: restore greater sage-grouse abundance and distribution near the 1980 spring breeding population level, approximately 3,000 birds.

The following habitat management is found in OAR 635-140-0010:

- Habitat goals:
  - (a) maintain or enhance the distribution of sagebrush habitats within greater sage-grouse range in Oregon; and
  - (b) manage those habitats in a variety of structural stages to benefit greater sage-grouse.
- Policy: manage a minimum of 70% of greater sage-grouse range for sagebrush habitat in advanced structural stages, sagebrush class 3, 4 or 5, with an emphasis on classes 4 and 5. The remaining approximately 30% includes areas of juniper encroachment, non-sagebrush shrubland, and grassland and should be managed to increase available habitat within greater sage-grouse range.
- Objective: To maintain and enhance existing sagebrush habitats and enhance potential habitats that have been disturbed such that there is no net loss of sagebrush habitat in the following regions:
  - (a) Baker Resource Area BLM: 82% sagebrush and 18% disturbed habitats.

(b) Vale District BLM (excluding Baker Resource Area): 70% sagebrush and 30% disturbed habitats.

(c) Burns District BLM: 68% sagebrush and 32% disturbed habitats.

(d) Lakeview District BLM: 72% sagebrush and 28% disturbed habitats.

(e) Prineville District BLM: 47% sagebrush and 53% disturbed habitats.

### ***Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy***

The Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy provides guidance to ODFW in evaluating the potential impact of development actions on fish and wildlife habitat. The Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy has been adopted into OAR, Chapter 635, Division 415. The Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy classifies habitat into one of six categories, depending upon the importance of the habitat to a specific species of fish or wildlife. The Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy sets guidelines to reduce, offset, or avoid the impact on fish and wildlife habitat. Specific terms are used in the policy to define the importance of the habitat to a particular species (ODFW 2012a).

According to Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy (OAR 635-415-0025), "Habitat Category I" is irreplaceable, essential habitat for a fish or wildlife species, population, or a unique assemblage of species and is limited on either a physiographic province or site-specific basis, depending on the individual species, population or unique assemblage. The mitigation goal for Category I habitat is no loss of either habitat quantity or quality.

### ***Mitigation Framework for Sage-Grouse Habitats***

Mitigation Framework for Sage-Grouse Habitats (ODFW 2012b) outlines interim guidance for development of ODFW habitat mitigation recommendations associated with renewable energy development and associated infrastructure or other landscape scale industrial-commercial developments in GRSG habitat in Oregon. The framework provides a methodology for quantifying only the area of impact. Basic project design rules or stipulations related to construction and maintenance (e.g., micro-siting, timing restrictions, general project design) would remain an integral part of recommendations to decision-makers ODFW 2012b.

These recommendations are to be implemented under the Core Area approach as described in Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy for Oregon: A Plan to Maintain and Enhance Populations and Habitats (Hagen 2011). Specifically, the proposed method of habitat quantification is intended for projects that will impact GRSG habitat (ODFW 2012b).

As project proposals are submitted to land management and planning authorities, ODFW biologists will consider available information, including on-site analysis to determine (ODFW 2012b):

- 1) Are the habitats those upon which sage-grouse depend?
- 2) Is there evidence of sage-grouse presence?
- 3) Is the site-specific habitat both essential and irreplaceable?

If the project is in a Core Area and a site specific analysis results in the answer to these questions as yes, then the ODFW recommendation will be to avoid impacts to those habitats, to be consistent with Habitat Category I habitat recommendations per Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy described above (ODFW 2012b).

To meet the objective of the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Policy (described above) with respect to sage-grouse habitats within Low Density Areas, mitigation sites will be prioritized and selected based on the following criteria in order of preference (ODFW 2012b):

- 1) Core Areas that occur within a Conservation Opportunity Area (COA) or other landscapes with on-going sage-grouse conservation actions;
- 2) Core Areas that occur outside of a COA;
- 3) Low Density Areas that occur within a COA or other landscapes with on-going sage-grouse conservation actions;
- 4) Low Density Areas that occur outside of a COA.

#### **ODFW Greater Sage-Grouse Habitats**

IM 2012-044 directs the BLM to collaborate with state wildlife agencies to identify and map PPH and PGH. In Oregon, the BLM developed a PPH and PGH map based on the ODFW Sage-Grouse Core Areas map (ODFW 2011). The Core Areas map did not include all general GRSG habitat, so the BLM collaborated with the ODFW and the BLM National Operations Center to add a layer with general habitat data to the Core Areas map. However, the terminology used to define GRSG habitat differs between agencies, and this could cause confusion during the land use planning process.

The Oregon BLM GRSG PPH and PGH map was developed by the BLM and the ODFW using the best available data. PPH is equivalent to Core area habitat, and PGH is composed of Low density habitat and currently occupied habitat. The BLM did not modify the ODFW's Low density habitat when it created PGH. The ODFW supports the BLM PPH and PGH GIS layer. The map may change as new information becomes available; such changes would be coordinated with the ODFW so that the delineation of PPH and PGH would provide for sustainable populations.

### **ES.8.6 Alternative F**

During scoping for this RMPA/EIS, individuals and conservation groups submitted management direction recommendations for protecting and conserving GRSG and habitat range-wide. The recommendations, in conjunction with resource allocation opportunities and internal sub-regional BLM input, were reviewed in order to develop BLM management direction for GRSG under Alternatives C and F. These alternatives contain a mixture of conservation measures from the NTT report and public input.

Conservation measures under Alternative F are focused on PPMA and PGMA. GRSG PGMA is occupied (seasonal or year-round) habitat outside of PPMA. These areas have been identified by state fish and wildlife agencies in coordination with respective BLM offices. A noteworthy difference between Alternatives C and F is that Alternative F provides greater restrictions on allowable uses and less resource management flexibility.

## **ES.9 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

The purpose of the environmental consequences analysis in this RMPA/EIS is to determine the potential for significant impacts of the federal action on the human environment. CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA state that the human environment is interpreted comprehensively to include the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment (40 CFR, Part 1508.14). The federal action is the BLM's selection of an RMPA that will provide a consistent framework for management of GRSG and its habitat on BLM-administered lands.

Management actions proposed in **Chapter 2, Alternatives**, are primarily planning-level decisions and typically would not result in direct on-the-ground changes. However, by planning for uses on BLM-administered surface estate and federal mineral estate during the planning horizon, this impact analysis focuses on impacts that could eventually result in on-the-ground changes. Impacts for some resources or resource uses, such as livestock grazing and off-highway vehicle use, could be confined to the BLM-administered surface estate. Other impacts, such as energy and minerals and requirements to protect GRSG from such activity, could apply to all BLM-administered federal mineral estate (including split-estate). Some management actions may affect only certain resources under certain alternatives. This impact analysis in **Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences**, identifies impacts that may enhance or improve a resource as a result of management actions, as well as those impacts that have the potential to impair a resource.

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